

ABSTRACT

The North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries' (DMF) mission is to manage the coastal fisheries for the optimum benefit of all of North Carolina's citizens. Management requires the evaluation of the status of stocks under given conditions (stock assessments). Information needed for these assessments includes stock identification, catch (landings, effort, and biological samples), and life history. Available data collected by the DMF come from long term monitoring programs (commercial and recreational statistics, fisheries catch sampling, and surveys) and short term research. Gaps in the available data are identified and species are prioritized based on commercial and recreational landings, jurisdiction, current problems and environmental considerations. Recommendations to fill the data gaps are based on data needs, data availability, and priorities. These recommendations include, but are not limited to: continue monitoring programs to collect landings, effort, age and size composition and year class abundance; conduct stock assessments and update them regularly; allocate the time and resources needed to conduct these analyses; implement mandatory commercial fisheries trip ticket reporting; and initiate biological sampling of hard clams and estuarine gill net fisheries.